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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

Letter dated 12 November 1993 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to forward the following comments in connection with the statement given by the Muslim representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 9 November 1993 in the Third Committee under agenda item 113 "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions" (see A/C.3/48/SR.28).

The Muslim representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina has abused the debate on refugee issues to render unsubstantiated and unfounded allegations against Serbian people and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia finds these allegations outrageous and fully renounces them.

The Muslim representative constantly overlooks that what is happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a civil war, a fact which has been recognized by all major international factors, including the United Nations.

The negative role of the Muslim side in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the ongoing civil war is well substantiated by reports of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Abuses in the former Yugoslavia. In his report dated 26 August 1993 (S/26383) concerning the situation in Sarajevo, the Special Rapporteur states that "men of all ages and backgrounds have been arrested in the street by members of government forces and forced to do dangerous work, digging trenches on the front line". The Special Rapporteur also emphasized in his report of 18 May 1993 (S/26469, annex) that "Arbitrary executions and torture have been carried out by government forces". On the question of the blocking of humanitarian aid, the Special Rapporteur states in his report of

26 August 1993 that "UNHCR representatives have reason to believe that the population figures given to them by the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina are inflated, with the result that food which could feed the civilian population is being siphoned off to the black market, or to feed the army. According to UNHCR, up to 20 per cent of its food aid may be diverted in this way".

With regard to humanitarian assistance, both in the statement made by the President of the Security Council on 9 November 1993 (S/26716) in which the Security Council "reiterates its demand to all parties and others concerned to guarantee unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance" as well as in the European Council's latest statement of 29 October 1993 (S/26678) in which the Council "holds the parties to the conflict directly responsible for establishing the conditions essential for any continuation of humanitarian aid ...", it is clear that all parties to the conflict in the former Bosnia and Herzegovina are responsible for safe passage of humanitarian aid. The Muslim representative, however, relentlessly sheds all responsibility of "government forces" for hindering humanitarian aid and maliciously accuses Serbs and the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for withholding aid. The Bosnian Serbs have on numerous occasions expressed their readiness to cooperate with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in ensuring, through the territory of the Serb Republic, delivery and safe passage of humanitarian aid to all the population of the former Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, there were a number of instances when that humanitarian aid was, in fact, abused to cover delivery of war matériel to the Bosnian Muslim side.

The Muslim representative, in blaming the Bosnian Serbs and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the civil war in former Bosnia and Herzegovina, is precisely covering up the actions of Bosnian Muslims, who, by refusing to sign the latest peace proposal and to continue negotiations with a view to finding a comprehensive peace solution, are directly responsible for such a situation. The latest statement by the Security Council as well as daily situation reports of UNPROFOR point out that conflicts which exist between Muslims and Croats, as well as Muslims opening fire on humanitarian convoys, are reasons why the humanitarian assistance is not reaching those in need.

The truth about the current situation in former Bosnia and Herzegovina is that a notion of Bosnia and Herzegovina dominated by Muslims has never left the mind of the Muslim leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In order to obtain such a result, nothing seemed to be sacred for the Muslim leadership. Repeated proposals by the Bosnian Serb side to allow free passage of all civilians between various parts of Sarajevo have constantly been denied by the Muslim side. So far Serbian proposals have been heeded only in the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia of the Republic of Bosnia, which shows that there is room for peaceful cooperation between Serbs and Muslims on the basis of equality and respect for mutual interests.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has from the very beginning of the civil war in the former Bosnia and Herzegovina directed all its efforts to ending the war and finding a comprehensive peaceful solution. On numerous occasions, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has proposed that its territory be used for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following recent discussions and efforts to ensure normal and safe movement of humanitarian aid convoys through the Split-Sarajevo

corridor, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has offered the use of a corridor from its Adriatic port of Bar to Sarajevo for the same purpose. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, H.E. Mr. V. Jovanovic, in his letter of 29 October 1993, to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the European Community, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, H.E. Mr. W. Claes, stated, inter alia, that such a corridor is "more convenient since it goes through the territories of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Serb Republic, where there are no military activities, ensuring unhampered passage of convoys and security of their escorts".

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, itself under Draconian and unjustified sanctions, has given shelter to more than 700,000 refugees, of whom 50,000 are Muslim.

Throughout the statement of the Muslim representative the sole purpose that is to be achieved is aimed not at solving the terrible humanitarian situation in former Bosnia and Herzegovina, but to obliterate Serbian people. For its part, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will continue, even in precarious circumstances, to do its utmost, to deliver humanitarian aid to those who are in need, irrespective of their origin, culture, religion or political affiliation, and to give shelter to refugees and displaced persons of the tragic civil war in former Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 113.

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Chargé d'affaires a.i.